

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Anne Johnson, Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) calls for the United States to introduce a resolution on China at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva this month because the Chinese government is continuing to engage in particularly severe violations of human rights, including religious freedom. The USCIRF commends Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA) for introducing and Congress for overwhelmingly passing House Resolution 530. Resolution 530 urges the U.S. government to take the lead in introducing and organizing multilateral support for a resolution at the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights calling on China to end its human rights violations and meet internationally recognized standards for human rights.

“The overwhelming vote by Congress is important because the Administration has yet to declare whether it will offer a China resolution at Geneva,” said USCIRF Chairman Michael Young. “While U.S.-Chinese relations are advancing in other important areas, our dialogue on human rights is stagnant and they have yet to demonstrate a willingness to abide by international human rights norms.”

Resolution 530 calls for the Government of the People's Republic of China to end its human rights violations in China and to allow the Chinese people to safely and openly practice their religious beliefs. The Resolution urges the Chinese government to stop its repression of all religious practitioners and safeguard fundamental human rights; stop the forced return of North Korean refugees; release from detention all prisoners of conscience, persons held because of their religious activities, and persons of humanitarian concern, including the 11th Panchen Lama; and allow, immediately and without restrictions, visits to China by the USCIRF.

As the legislation states, the Chinese government promised to permit a USCIRF trip to China without conditions as part of the 2002 U.S.-China Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue. The USCIRF attempted to travel to China twice in the past year but was thwarted in both attempts by unacceptable limits imposed by the Chinese government. The Commission recently visited Hong Kong, but continues to seek a visit to other regions of China as part of its mandate to study international religious freedom conditions and make policy recommendations to the Congress and the Administration.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Dean Michael K. Young
- Felice D. Gaer